

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 are cancelled. Claims 19-37 are pending and were restricted as follows under 35 USC § 121:

- I. Claims 19-31 are said to be drawn to a method of making a molded preform,
- II. Claims 32 are said to be drawn to a molded preform,
- III. Claims 33-35 are said to be drawn to a method of making an exhaust system component,
- IV. Claim 36 is said to be drawn to an exhaust system component
- V. Claim 37 is said to be drawn to an exhaust system.

Election

In response, Applicants elect Group I (Claims 19-31), with traverse. Reconsideration and withdrawal or modification of the restriction requirement is respectfully requested.

In support of the restriction, the Office Action states:

The inventions listed as Groups I-V do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons:

The special technical features common to every group are: the steps of making a molded preform for use in an exhaust system, providing a slurry of glass fiber insulation material, providing a mold to form a molded preform, processing the slurry to form the molded preform and removing water from the slurry using a water removal system. Knutsson (US 5,766,541) explicitly discloses these steps (See Figs. 1-10; Col. 1, line 40 - Col. 2, line 45; Col. 3, line 8 - Col. 4, line 45; Col. 11, lines 35-63; Claims 1-20).

It is respectfully submitted that the inventions listed as Groups I-V do relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1, because all of the claims are directly or indirectly dependent upon claim 19 and claim 19 does recite at least one special technical feature that is not taught by Knutsson.

In accordance with the teachings of the present application, chopped glass fibers, binder material and water are mixed together to form a slurry. The resulting slurry is then disposed into a mold constructed to form a molded preform. In contrast, Knutsson does not disclose "providing a slurry of insulation material", as originally recited in claim 19. Knutsson discloses feeding a

continuous length of glass fiber strand material **5**, simultaneously with binder material and water, into a perforated mold **20** (see Figs. 9 and 10, and col. 10, line 28 through col. 12, line 8). In particular, the continuous length of glass fiber strand material **5** is fed into the feed apparatus **500** through the fiber feeding portion **502** at the entrance to apparatus **500** (see Fig. 10 and col. 10, lines 31-40). The binder is fed into apparatus **500** through the feeding tube **516** of binder feeding portion **506**, which forms the outlet **501** of apparatus **500** (see col. 11, lines 20-28). The water is fed into apparatus **500** through a separate feeding tube **518**, which is also near the outlet **501** of apparatus **500** (see col. 11, lines 28-35). The continuous length of fiber strand material **5** is cut to a desired length by knife blade **550**. The fiber strand material **5** is not cut, however, until "[a]fter an appropriate length of the strand material **5** has been fed into one of the molds **20**" (see col. 11, lines 54-55 and Col. 10, lines 41-43). Therefore, unlike the present invention, Knutsson does not disclose mixing chopped fibers, binder material and water together to form a slurry (i.e., mixture) before disposing the mixture (i.e., slurry) into a mold. Claim 19 has been amended to more clearly recite this distinction.

In light of the above remarks, it is submitted that the inventions listed as Groups I-V do relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1, because the claims of Groups I-V do recite a special technical feature under PCT Rule 13.2. Accordingly, this restriction requirement should be withdrawn and all of claim 19-37 examined, as amended.

Conclusion

Applicants have elected Group I with traverse, as indicated by the above remarks. Continued prosecution of this application is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the indicated telephone number with questions that can be resolved with a simple teleconference.

Respectfully submitted,

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